

Testimony of The Capitol Child Development Center on  
SB 111 AN ACT CONCERNING FUNDING FOR CHILD CARE PROGRAMS.

Members of the Appropriations committee, thank you for this opportunity to testify on SB 111. My name is Barbara Jo Warner and I live in West Hartford. I support SB 111 with the following provisions.

The child care sector is in crisis. We need workers now. Some child care businesses have closed, but many more have closed classrooms because they can't find staff. This puts them in danger of closing in the next few months.

The ENTIRE system needs equitable support across all settings. There is no room to raise tuition for parents that can't afford early care and education now.

This means we need on-going, substantial wage supplements and benefits for small private centers, nonprofit centers (including religious programs) and family childcare providers.

Plus, the state funded and school readiness programs, which have not had a meaningful increase since 2015, need to have reimbursement rates generously adjusted so that they are able to continue to provide high quality care and education.

The Capitol Child Development Center (CCDC) has been a staple in Hartford for over twenty (20) years. We have provided early care and education for young children who reside in the city and many surrounding towns; we have families enrolled who live in Hartford and several families who work in Hartford and bring their children in to the city with them so they can have close access to their children during their workday. The combination of blended families from different socio-economic backgrounds has provided CCDC with an organic community that our families treasure and value as much as we do.

In 2020, when the pandemic hit the United States, it changed the way of life for everyone. It negatively impacted all businesses but was particularly harsh on the field of early care and education which is deemed an essential part of working families. Capitol Child Development Center was at full enrollment prior to March 13, 2020, but after the nationwide shutdown of all

businesses, we have been challenged to regain our enrollment. I attribute this to several factors, the first one being that over 90% of our families stopped working or started to work remotely.

2ndly, the metrics of the virus have waivered and changed consistently since the beginning (as is the way that science evolves) and has left not only families of young children, but also teachers' of young children extremely hesitant to be a part of an environment that is almost impossible to ensure social distancing and mask wearing (for the youngest children, not for staff). At the Capitol Child Development Center we lost nine (9) full time teachers, out of fifteen (15) and our enrollment dropped by over 70%. The combination of lost revenue coupled with the difficulty securing staff for our classrooms has left us in a precarious state where we are fiscally holding on by a thread. Many centers have closed over the past two (2) years, and we are terrified that we might become one of those programs. Currently we have twenty-one (21) children out of a possible seventy (70) children enrolled. We have very few families on our waitlist as most have determined that they will continue to work remotely and do not require childcare outside of their homes. Without tuition revenue, we can not begin to increase the woefully inadequate salaries that our teachers earn and the required credentials to operate a program in Connecticut have caused many candidates to look for alternate occupations.

Without the emergency funds that we have been given through the Office of Early Childhood, we would not have been able to continue to provide care and education over the past two (2) years and we would have succumbed to the closure of our program. We are thankful and grateful for the financial assistance that we have received, but unfortunately, it is not enough to help sustain our status for the foreseeable future. We were hopeful that President Biden would have been able to pass the Build Back Better legislation, but that doesn't appear to be in the cards. We are desperately relying upon the CT legislature to help save our programs, especially centers such as CCDC who provide care for Infants and Toddlers. Thank you for hearing our pleas for the much needed financial support that our entire field is requiring to grow into the future.

Regards,

Barbara Jo Warner, Executive Director

Capitol Child Development Center

450 Broad St.

Hartford, CT. 06106

(860) 240-0330